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PLACEMENT TEST IN FRENCH.
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THE USE OF THE COLLEGE ENTRANCE EXAMINATION BOARD TEST FOR PLACEMENT IN FRENCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN IS OUTLINED. A GENERAL STATEMENT ON CUT-OFF SCORES IS FOLLOWED BY PLACEMENT STATISTICS FOR OVER 1,200 STUDENTS WHO TOOK THE TEST DURING SPRING AND SUMMER OF 1966. TEST PERFORMANCE, COURSE SELECTION, AND NUMBER OF YEARS OF HIGH SCHOOL FRENCH ARE CORRELATED. A COMPARISON IS DRAWN BETWEEN THOSE FRESHMEN WHO TOOK THE TEST BEFORE AND DURING SUMMER ORIENTATION. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE COURIER," NUMBER 39, JANUARY 1968, PAGES 12-19. (AF)

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PLACEMENT TEST IN FRENCH

The following is a preliminary report on the use of the College Entrance Examination Board test for placement in French at the University of Michigan. It was made in answer to a request by the Admissions Committee to determine the efficacy of placement by the CEEB French test in relation to whether or not the test was taken prior to Summer Orientation. This report also includes additional statistics concerning the French placement test results.

I. General Statement

The cut-off scores were established after administering the CEEB test as part of the final examination for French 102-232 in the fall semester of 1965. The placement scales, which correspond more or less to the median scores achieved by the courses involved (C-C+), are as follows:

	Reading	Listening
French 103	350-474	350-449
French 231	474-549	450-449
French 232	550-599	500-599
French 361/387*	600+	600+

*Language requirement fulfilled; may elect these third year courses

The general placement policy worked out by the Department was that:

1. **If a student is placed in two different courses on the basis of two skills (Reading and Listening Comprehension), and if these courses are in sequence, then he will be placed in the lower course. (e.g., 231 and 103 = 103)**
2. **If he is placed in two different courses which are not next to each other, and**
   a) **if they are separated by one course, place him in that course (e.g., 103 and 232 + 231)**

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b) if these two courses are separated by more than two courses, then the case should be referred to the Department with the student's high school French records. (e.g., 103 and 361/387+ refer to the Dept.)

3. Students who score less than 350 in each part of the test should be firmly discouraged from attempting any continuation of French and should be guided to a different election. If, for personal reasons, they persist in their desire to continue French, they should be strongly warned that success in 103 is not very likely.

It should be mentioned that no cases belonging to Category 2-b above were reported, and that over 30 students, who were placed in 103 with scores definitely above 350 in both parts of the test, and who found that course too difficult, were permitted to elect French 101 by special permission by the Dean or the Department. It is unlikely, however, that such cases will arise next year, since the policy to allow students with high school French only to audit French 101 and not to let them compete directly with genuine beginners has been established this semester.

II. General Placement Statistics

Over twelve hundred students took the placement test during the spring and summer of 1966. The table below indicates the placement distribution with reference to the amount of French studies in high school:

		101	103	231	232	361/387	TOTAL
1 year	spring*	0	1+	0	2	?	3+
	summer	3	25	0	0	1	29
	no elect.**	0	26+	1+	0	-	27+
	total***	3	52+	1+	2	1	59+
		5.1%	88.1%	1.7%	3.4%	1.7%	
2 years	spring	2	8+	0+	1+	?	11+
	summer	24	240	35	13	4	316
	no elect.	0	118+	17+	5+	-	140+
	total	26+	366+	52+	19+	4+	467+
		5.6%	78.3%	11.1%	4.1%	0.8%	
3 years	spring	0	5+	10+	10+	?	25+
	summer	0	82	103	58	37	280
	no elect.	0	41+	25+	9+	-	75+
	total	0	128+	138+	77+	37+	380+
			33.7%	36.3%	20.0%	9.7%	

		101	103	231	232	361/387	TOTAL
4 years	spring	0	1+	5+	18+	?	24+
	summer	0	19	51	81	109	260
	no elect.	0	11+	18+	9+	-	38+
	total	0	31+	74+	108+	109+	322+
			9.6%	23.0%	33.6%	33.8%	
5 years	spring	0	0+	0+	0+	?	0+
	summer	0	0	6	15	35	56
	no elect.	0	0+	4+	0+	-	4+
	total	0	0+	10+	15+	35+	60+
				16.7%	25.0%	58.3%	

Number of students who took the test: 1288+

Number of those who took it prior to Summer Orientation: 63+
(4.9% of Total)

Number of those who took it during Summer Orientation: 1225
(95.1% of Total)

Number of those who elected French in the Fall: 1004
(78% of Total)

Number of those who did not elect French in the Fall: 284+
(22% of Total)

*The number of students who took the CEEB test in the spring is known to be about 145, but only 63 students elected French in the fall semester.

**The number for each course indicates students who took the CEEB test during Summer Orientation only.

***Percentage figures are approximate.

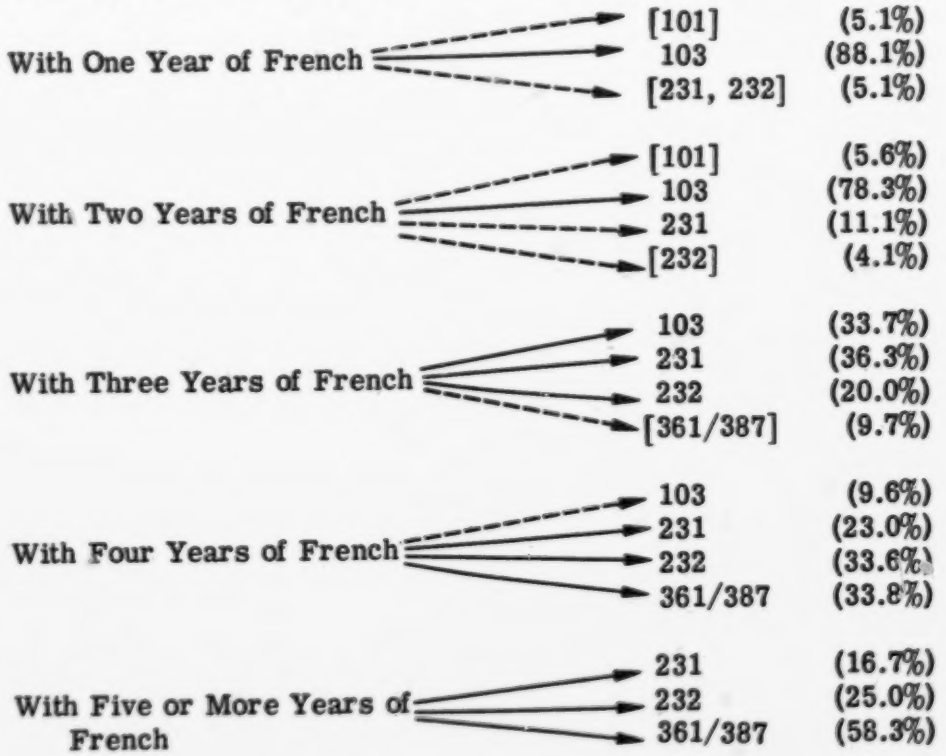
It is interesting to note that not only the number of students who display fourth semester proficiency and thus fulfill the College graduation requirement increases according to the number of years of high school French completed (47% of those with 3 or more years of French), but also that nearly 60% (59.9%) of the entire students who took the test had had 3 or more years of French in high school. The percentage of those with 3 or more years of French in the past years is given below:

1966	59.9%	(out of 1288+)
1963	54.0%	(out of 1010)
1962	47.0%	(out of 1002)
1960	39.5%	(out of 783)
1957	38.0%	(out of 608)

It may be assumed that the number of students with three or more units of French will continue to grow, as more and more high schools are beginning to offer programs beyond the "standard" two-year curriculum.

It should also be observed that the number of students who did not elect a French course immediately (or elected another language, or perhaps no languages were required for them) is far greater among those with only one or two years of French, as compared to those with three or four years of French.

The correlation of the placement results vs. the number of years of high school French is summed up in the following chart:



It is fairly obvious that the traditional concept that one year of high school French equals one semester of college French is not a dependable formula. This is due to the extensive frequency of upward or downward individual deviation (mostly downward), even though the frequency of "normal" proficiency does increase from 11% to 33% with 2-4 units of high school French.

It should be noted that most of the students with two units of high school French are not ready to begin a second-year (third-semester) course, and even for those with four units of French, only 1/3 are "placed out" of requirement. The unpredictability of placement without the test for those with three of four years of high school

French obviously poses problems. Such cases are usually handled by the Department, after an inquiry into the student's high school grades in French, texts he had used, his linguistic aptitude, his interest in the subject matter, etc.

The placement test is not an infallible oracle for the success or failure of a student in a given course. Every semester adjustments are made for those students who feel that they have been ill placed. Such students usually do not hesitate to do so, and the instructors are on the look out at the beginning of each semester for those whose work seems below the norm for the course. Altogether, some 60 adjustments were made last semester, most of them downward (e.g., from 231 to 103). Yet the number of students whose elections were changed constituted no more than 6% of the total number of students who elected French after taking the placement test. This figure is only slightly higher than the past figure (e.g., about 5% in 1963) when our own three-part placement test was in use, and seems to attest to the reliability of the CEEB test for placement purposes.

It should also be noted that the majority of adjustment cases involved a change of election from 103 to 101: More than 30 students found 103 too difficult and were placed back into 101. All such students avoided receiving a failing grade in 101. The table below indicates the percentage of grades received in 101 by those with high school French (mostly with 2 units) and by those who are genuine beginners or repeaters:

	those with HS French		others	
A	3	(8.1%)	33	(13.4%)
B	12	(32.4%)	43	(17.5%)
C	20	(54.1%)	109	(44.6%)
D	2	(5.4%)	51	(20.6%)
E	0		10	(4.1%)

A detailed study is being conducted on the comparison of the achievement by the students who were placed directly into a course by the test and that by those who enrolled in it after completing a previous course at the University. It is expected, as the results of a similar study two years ago indicated, that the direct "places" would have a better chance of capturing high grades or at least avoiding low grades. Since the acquisition of linguistic skills depend to a large extent on the total amount of exposure of the language, those with several years of high school French have a definite advantage over their classmates and they continue to maintain that advantage throughout the semester. In addition, the incoming students tend to be "better" students because they had to meet the placement scale for the preceding course with a C or C+ in one test

and even better in the other (because of our placement policy), while the students coming from our own courses need only a passing grade of D.

III. Comparison of Placement Results Between Those Who Took the Test Prior to Summer Orientation and Those Who Took it During Summer Orientation

Since only less than 5% of the students took the CEEB test prior to Summer Orientation, it is difficult to ascertain whether or not the time differentials are of any significance in the achievement after placement. The following table was established according to the criteria given by Professor Milholland, namely:

1. Those who made C's and B's would be regarded as properly placed.
2. Those who made D's and E's would be regarded as improperly placed.
3. Those who made A's would be regarded as improperly placed if the number of years of HS French taken indicated that they should have been placed higher.

		One Year		Two Years	
		spr.	summ.	spr.	summ.
101	A	0	0	0	1
	B-C	0	3	2	21
	D-E	0	0	0	2
	(no E's)				
103	A	0	2	1(12.5%)	18(7.5%)
	B-C	1	19	5(62.5%)	185(77.1)
	D-E	0	4	2(25)	37(15.4)
	(no E's)				
231	A			0	2
	B-C			0	32
	D-E			0	1
	(no E's)				
	A	0	0	0	3
	B-C	1	0	1	9
	D-E	1	0	0	1
	(no E's)				

		Three Years		Four Years	
		spr.	summ.	spr.	summ.
	A				
101	B-C				
	D-E				
	(no E's)				
	A	1(20%)	6(7.3%)	0	1
103	B-C	4(80)	71(86.6)	1	17
	D-E	0(0)	5(6.1)	0	1
	(no E's)				
	A	1(10%)	9(8.7%)	1(20%)	3(5.7%)
231	B-C	9(90)	89(86.5)	3(60)	45(88.2)
	D-E	0	5(4.8)	1(20)	3(5.9)
	(no E's)				
	A	0	11(18.9%)	3(16.7%)	8(9.7%)
232	B-C	10(100%)	46(79.3)	15(83.3)	72(88.8)
	D-E	0	1(1.7)	0	1(1.2)
	(no E's)				

The table above indicates that the category I (properly placed) ranges between 76%-89% for Summer Group and 60%-100% for Spring Group; for category II (improperly placed, low grades), 1.2%-8% for Summer Group, 0%-25% for Spring Group; for category III (improperly placed, high grades), 4%-18.9% for Summer Group, and 0%-20% for Spring Group; it should be observed, however, that none of the students received a failing grade in the course, and that the 25% for Spring Group in the improperly placed category (grades too low) occurs only in groups of 8 and 5 students each and does not warrant a definite conclusion.

The largest sampling comes from those with three years of high school French who are placed in a second-year course, and those with four years of high school French, who are placed in the fourth-semester course. These groups, incidentally, constitute more or less "properly placed" cases in terms of the chart given on page 15. In these cases, the correlation between the grades and placement seems to be about the same for both Summer and Spring Groups (slightly higher for the latter group.)

The case of those with two units of high school French who were placed in 103 and who received low grades (D's) might indicate that perhaps more students with poor background could have been placed back in 101, or perhap 102.

As it has been mentioned, the number of students who took the CEEB test prior to Summer Orientation and who also elected French is considerably small (4.9%). Our comparison is probably not valid because of the insufficient data provided. It may be well worth

conducting Study II, i.e., to see if there may be definite differences in the placement scores of some 100 students who take the test in the spring and who will be retested toward the end of Summer Orientation period and further compare the results of such a study with another study similar to the present one.

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